

Association for Volunteer Administration Distinguished Member Service Award Acceptance Speech

Joanne Holbrook Patton

At the 1987 National Conference on Volunteerism, Joanne Patton was presented with AVA's Distinguished Member Service Award. Ms. Patton is founder, owner and director of Patton Consultant Services in Hamilton, Massachusetts, a national brokerage of trainers, consultants and speakers. The firm is dedicated to the improvement of volunteer service. A tireless worker for AVA, Ms. Patton is the former coordinator for the Certification program, chairs the Association's Task Force on Higher Education, and has been Vice Chair of the Professional Development Committee.

For a volunteer who only in recent times has learned to accept the label "professional," this is a nearly-overwhelming experience! To be invited to take a place behind the giants of our field and in front of so many more of my mentors and teachers from whom I am still learning is truly staggering. But the greatest thrill for me at this moment is to have my name linked with that of the great and wonderful Harriet Naylor. Flooding back to memory tonight is a day, long but not long enough ago, when I first met her:

I was a brand new AVA member, really only one on paper. Still in uniform as a "volunteer volunteer administrator," and believing myself slightly unworthy of membership in a professional organization, I was still feeling somewhat out of place. I knew that the volunteer world of the military was different. It used other terminology, operated in other sectors, and seldom shared the civilian milieu at that time. Of course, I had been privileged to attend a workshop in Boulder for volunteer managers, where I was surprised to find that others had problems and concerns similar to mine. Still, when I was leaving and the course director, Marlene Wilson, pressed a note into my hand, saying, "When you are back in Washington, you really should look up Harriet Naylor. Here's her number," I tucked it away. Certainly, the author of *Volunteers Today* wouldn't want to see *me!*

But on this day, I was browsing through my AVA Region's membership roster, looking for my own name, when I found to my astonishment, the name, address, and even the phone number of Harriet Naylor on the same page as mine! Remembering Marlene's encouragement, I got up my nerve, called for an appointment and went on down to HEW (Department of Health, Education and Welfare), carrying my dog-eared copy of Harriet's book, for security and maybe an autograph.

I found her in a cubbyhole office, so obscure that it told me HEW didn't know what a jewel they had there. Timidly, I opened her office door and said, "Good morning, Ms. Naylor . . ." Before I could go any further, that little, bouyant, smiling person jumped out of her chair, her hand extended, and came over to me, saying, "Hello, I'm Hat!"

So there went the formalities! Harriet had taken me right in, and so, I found, had AVA. We were colleagues from the beginning and to stay.

In accepting from you this extraordinary honor, named for that incomparable "inspirer," I sense its vivid parallel to the message Harriet's welcome gave me that long ago day. It says to me that together we have matured into a professional association which accepts and even celebrates the rich variety and differences among us: the

range of programs, cultures and specialities we represent, our geographical stretch (soon to cross even language barriers), and the overdue recognition of kinship between the volunteer who is an administrator and the administrator who in another part of life is a volunteer. We are educating each other, we are enriched by each other, we are supporting one another with enthusiasm for "reaching new heights." We are fully engaged in what Harriet Naylor referred to as the "gift relationship": that precious exchange between giver and receiver which blesses us both. It is the heart of volunteerism and it is the heart of collegueship in AVA.

Your endorsement of my life by sharing yours with me is a precious gift indeed. I will do my best to earn it . . . and to honor Harriet Naylor . . . by passing it along. I count on each of you to continue to do the same for me.

Thank you all.